

MANIFESTO OF THE CONGRESS — OF THE — **SOCIALISTIC LABOR PARTY,**

HELD AT BALTIMORE, MD., DECEMBER 26 TO 28, 1883.

To the Workmen of the United States.

FELLOW WORKMEN:

Since in this great republic, despite its enormous natural resources of all kinds, despite the absence of princes and large standing armies, despite a peace of one hundred years — interrupted only by the civil war waged for the abolition of slavery — since, despite all these wonderfully favorable circumstances, poverty and misery have here too increased in a measure, as but a short time ago, only few would have considered possible, since this time, even the most confident have realized the truth that the United States too are irresistibly going forward to that great revolution, which will change the face of the civilized world, will annihilate the present infernal plundering system of the ruling classes, will take the terrible pressure from the shoulder of the workingman, and will bring a new and better future for all humanity. Since the social conditions of the old world have long been as bad or worse than those now existing in the United States, our brothers in Europe have endeavored by the aid of experience and science, to discover the cause of these circumstances, and to find the remedy. In the same way, a large number of workingmen of America have, for several years, made similar researches, and they have unanimously arrived at a conclusion, whose substance is laid down in the following platform:

Labor being the creator of all wealth and civilization, it rightfully follows that those who labor and create all wealth should enjoy the full result of their toil. Therefore we declare:

That a just and equitable distribution of the fruits of labor is utterly impossible under the present system of society. This fact is abundantly illustrated by the deplorable condition of the working classes, which are in a state of destitution and degrading dependence in the midst of their own productions. While the hardest and most disagreeable work brings to the worker only the bare necessities of life, others who labor not, riot in labor's production. We furthermore declare:

That the present industrial system of competition, based on rent, profit-taking and interest, causes and intensifies this inequality, concentrating into the hands of a few, all means of production, distribution and the results of labor, thus creating gigantic monopolies dangerous to the people's liberties; and we further declare:

That these monster monopolies and these consequent extremes of wealth and poverty supported by class legislation are subversive of all democracy, injurious to the national interests and destructive of truth and morality. This state of affairs, continued and upheld by the ruling political parties is against the welfare of the people.

To abolish this system, with a view to establish cooperative production, and to secure equitable distribution, we demand that the resources of life, namely land, the means of production, public transportation and exchange, become as fast as practicable the property of the whole people.

Our fellow workmen will see that the principles laid down in this platform are as true for this country as for Europe, and their experience will confirm it. It is indifferent to the workingman in general, whether he is exploited in the corporation factories of the New England states, in the coal mines of Pennsylvania and Illinois, or in the factory-districts of Belgium, England and Germany.

The same causes must necessarily produce the same effects everywhere. The employer in New York, Philadelphia and Chicago, forces you in exactly the same way, to *divide* with him your well-earned wages, as the employer in Manchester, Paris and Berlin. And he can use this *force* only because he is the proprietor of the factories, the machinery, the soil, in one word, all means of production. He is owner of all this, by precisely the same right, by which the former slave-holders were owners of their slaves. And as the "sacred property" of the slave-holders was confiscated, because this was demanded by the interests of humanity, so must the ruling classes, monopolists and capitalists be forced to surrender the privileges, granted to them by the laws of to-day, in order that at last be extinguished those execrable conditions, which make it possible that comparatively few riot in boundless affluence, whilst the millions sink ever deeper in misery and economical — and consequently political — dependence.

But how attain this result? Fellow workmen! there is only one method, which contains all other, and this one method is *organization*. Do not hope to accomplish anything singly and alone. As your opponents, who, without this are powerful enough, unite to defend their interests against all attacks, so must you rally to one great invincible phalanx, if you hope to gain but a foot of ground. Organize in every practical way; as trades unions, workmen's parties, socialists; unite with your brethren throughout the land and also beyond the sea, for lastingly, you can accomplish nothing without them, nor they without you. But under all circumstances, organize! if you fail to do this, the circumstances will develop much bloodier and much more fatal for you, and the change into a new and better state will come about much more slowly and difficultly, than will otherwise be the case. Bread-riots will take place, for the ever harder biting misery will undoubtedly cause them, but they will be suppressed, since no organized labor, conscious of its aims, is behind them, or in case of a momentary success of the rioters, they will be crushed by the ensuing reaction, since the victors lack the intelligence to use their victory properly. Organize; make use of the legal institutions of the land; do your utmost, to send your own representatives, independent of the old corrupt parties, into the legislative bodies. Make the most of this opportunity to strengthen your organization and to propagate the doctrines you aim at.

In one word, leave no practicable method untried, to strengthen yourselves and your cause, and to weaken your enemies. But perhaps you may ask, whether it is possible to accomplish your aims by these means, *peaceably*?

Fellow workmen! Look around you and listen to the teachings of history. History shows, that the privileged classes have rarely, if ever, surrendered their privileges, without forcible compulsion. The history of our own country furnishes a striking example in the late rebellion. And when you look around, what do you see? You see everywhere

the employer violate most brutally even the civil rights of the employed; you see, how they compel the workingman to give up his organizations, by threatening him with all the woes of hunger and misery; how they frequently try to sow bloody dissensions among the workingmen themselves, and oppose their just demands with force of arms; you see, furthermore, how in all these excesses, they are supported by a government, that to-day exists only in the interests of the ruling classes, by the police, and when necessary, by the military power. You know how these classes, well trained to all the tricks of political corruption, have always been skilful in the art of falsifying the alleged will of the people, expressed at the polls, and that they surely will employ these sorts of falsification all the more, the more dangerous to their interests the increasing organization of the workingmen becomes; under these conditions, we must expect that our enemies—when they see our power increase in a peaceful and legal way and our victory approaching—will, on their part—just as the slaveholders—become rebels, and that then the time will come for the cause of labor, when that old, prime lever of all revolutions,—effective as long as mankind is still in a half barbarous state—force must be applied to, in order to place the working masses in control of the state, which then for the first time, will be the representative, not of a few privileged classes, but of all society.

The Socialistic Labor Party has for years recognized and loudly and distinctly proclaimed this probable,—yes, inevitable—development of affairs, and it is highly satisfactory to see that other organizations are embracing these views more and more, and give evidence of this in their proclamations.

We surely do not participate in the folly of those men, who consider dynamite bombs the best means of agitation to produce the greatest revolution that ever took place in the social life of mankind, we know very well that a revolution in the opinions of men and the economical conditions of society must precede, ere a lasting success can be obtained in the interest of the working masses. But we dare not conceal from our fellow workmen the nature of the struggle for which they must prepare. Furthermore, we believe that even to-day the workingmen should not permit brutal violations of their rights, and should resent them with all their might. We sympathize with every manly deed, which is apt to arouse the spirit of independence in the workingman and to satisfy his sense of justice. The members of the ruling and exploiting classes must learn to-day that in their warfare with the workingman, they cannot appeal to brutal force and falsification of justice with impunity.

Fellow workmen! The way to our end is not an easy one! But there is no other, and there is no hope for you and your children, unless you choose that way. But before you attain your ultimate ends, you can improve your condition, or at least prevent it from getting worse, if you compel the realization of the following demands by your organizations and strive for their enactment as laws in all states:

Bureaus of Labor Statistics, Reduction of the Hours of Labor, Abolition of Contract Convict Labor, Employers Liability Law, Prohibition of Child Labor, Compulsory Education, Factory, Mine and Workshop Inspection, Sanitary Inspection of Food and Dwellings, and Payment of Wages in Cash.

Fellow workmen! We address these words to you at a momentous time. All signs tend to show that a terrible crisis is again approaching, a crisis which will rage frightfully in the ranks of the workmen.

Fellow workmen! Do not hesitate, lose not a moment, ere the deepest misery destroys you, or saps your vital strength, rendering you powerless for any resistance. Organize! Agitate! Every day, every hour. Necessity, misery and oppression threaten you more and more every day, that is certain, but only your own power will save you, that is more certain.

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